

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The availability of library services and materials and the essential role libraries play in improving the quality of life should be conveyed on a continuous basis through a sustained community and public relations program. The ability to demonstrate a positive image of the library and promote its services and programs to the community can mean the difference between a barely adequate library and one that receives wide support from the community at large and from the library's funding sources. The community and public relations program should be both internal and external, reaching staff, trustees, volunteers, Friends groups, and community leaders as well as users and nonusers of the library. (Planning for Library Excellence, Revised [Draft])

Public relations goes beyond the development of publicity to advertise the services and resources of the library. It encompasses a total program in which the library projects the true images of what it is and how it functions, with the goal of developing better understanding and support from the various publics that it serves.

Libraries seldom sell themselves. Reality dictates that they must be marketed if they are to realize their full potential. It is essential, therefore, for trustees to have a clear understanding of the importance of public relations, to establish a public relations policy, and to become involved as a board and as individuals.

Publicity

There are a variety of ways in which the library can inform the community of its services and foster a positive public image. Liberal use of the media and creative use of all forms of publicity help to make the public aware of the wide range of materials and services that the library provides. The board must assure that time, staff, and funding are available for advertising library services.

Board Responsibilities

- Establish a public relations policy.
- Assure that the library has a public relations plan and schedule.
- Support staff training and involvement in the public relations program.
- Participate in public relations events and evaluate the public relations program and public services.
- Budget for public relations.

Individual Trustee Responsibilities

- Be vocal, visible, and well-informed.
- Use the library and spread the word.
- Listen to the community.
- Talk to individual groups about the library's progress, plans, and policies.
- Work closely with local officials.

- Tell people what trustees do, who they are, when they meet, and how they can be reached.
- Sell the philosophy and merits of high-quality library service.
- Provide facts and figures to persuade people.
- Support the Friends for the Library and recruit members.

Does your library have a plan for public relations?

Does the budget include funds for public relations?

Do you actively promote the library in the community?